

The period for the following progress report is October 1, 2006 through June 30, 2008.

PRIORITY 1 : INCREASE STATE APPROPRIATED MATCH
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Goal 1.1: Obtain increased state match for Vocational Rehabilitation program (VR).

1.1.A. Extent Achieved

At the beginning of State Fiscal Year 2007 AZRSA received an additional \$1.9 million in General Fund dollars to draw down \$8.9 million in the basic support (Title 110) Federal formula grant for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for a total program increase of 24.4 million dollars. This enabled AZRSA to “open all categories: in its Order of Selection and provide services to all individuals with a disability eligible for the public VR program in Arizona for FY 2007. Due to the State of Arizona’s budget shortfall in SFY 2008, AZRSA, Vocational Rehabilitation Program lost \$500,000 state appropriated dollars, decreasing the total VR Program revenue by \$2,347,418.

1.1.B. Strategies Used

The SRC and GCBVI both prepared letters with factual information which was distributed to members of the Legislature with critical information related to the need for additional state match to fully fund the VR Program and subsequently met with Senators and Representatives on this funding issue.

The Governor’s Council on Developmental Disabilities supported AZRSA by preparing a Position Paper and distributing it to the members of the Legislature related to the need for additional state match in order to fully fund AZRSA’s VR Program.

1.1.C. Impediments to Achievement

An additional decrease in state revenue was assessed from the AZRSA Vocational Rehabilitation Program in SFY 2008 as stated above due to the State of Arizona’s budget shortfall for SFY 2008.

Goal 1.2: Increase communication and knowledge of AZRSA VR client successes to the Arizona Legislature and general public through councils, consumer and advocacy groups, and other constituency groups.

1.2.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA has continued to partner with Councils, consumer and advocacy groups, and with other constituency groups to increase marketing the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Dissemination of information about the VR Program to the Legislature, the public, and others

continues to be an important community education tool. These activities as well as other strategies will continue to be employed throughout the year in an effort to develop greater levels of public understanding related to the VR Program with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of referrals to the VR Program. AZRSA has increased referrals to the VR Program by 32% and applicants have increased by 29.3% as of June 30, 2008 as compared to the same time period in FFY 2007. Between FFY 2006 and FFY 2007, AZRSA, in the category of most significant disabilities, displayed an increase in the number of referrals from 3,300 to 3,442. AZRSA has had an increase in the number of VR program applicants from 6,205 in FFY 2006 to 6,893 in FFY 2007 which reflects an 11% increase.

1.2.B Strategies Used

AZRSA continues to work with a leading marketing firm, *RIESTER SONARAN LLC (RIESTER)* which has a statewide contract for marketing services in order to increase communication and knowledge of the VR Program. A revised Vocational Rehabilitation Program brochure was completed and distributed in February, 2008. In addition to the brochure an RSA poster was also completed and distributed to assist in advertising VR. Other marketing products currently in production include: RSA banners/posters for display in RSA offices and in other DES locations throughout the state; a new VR Orientation video/DVD featuring successful VR clients; and an online streaming vignette featuring the RSA Administrator advertising AZRSA's VR Program of services on the Internet. Other AZRSA brochures are scheduled to be completed on transition and employer services.

Partnering with Councils, consumer and advocacy groups, and with other constituency groups to develop and prepare information related to AZRSA programs and the services it offers will continue to be an important community education tool. Strategies along this venue will be continued in order to increase marketing efforts and develop greater levels of public understanding related to the VR Program so that additional individuals with disabilities will access the VR Program.

AZRSA community events include the AZRSA District II and VI Tucson Annual Awards Ceremony held on October 24, 2007 honoring VR clients who have overcome major obstacles to achieve a successful employment outcome. Employers were also identified for their exceptional efforts related to assisting VR clients in achieving gainful employment. Many local Legislators attended this event to celebrate the VR clients who have been successful. Those present for the ceremony were Representative Olivia Cajero Bedford, Senator Jorge Luis Garcia, Senator Victor Soltero, and Senator Tim Bee. Awards were given to 49 VR clients and to six employers. There were between 200 and 250 people attending this event, which included family members, friends, community rehabilitation service providers, Legislators, and other representatives from the local area which provided exhibit booths and community information. The DES Communications Department/Public Information Office prepared Public Information Releases on this event, and the DES Public Information Officer in Tucson was instrumental in helping to publicize this event. This annual affair has been an effective means to increase the awareness of the AZRSA/VR Program in Tucson and the surrounding

community. Plans for the 2008 AZRSA District II and VI Tucson Annual Awards Ceremony are underway with the event being planned for October. Activities similar to the Tucson Awards Ceremony are held in other AZRSA districts around the state recognizing VR clients who have achieved gainful employment.

1.2.C Impediments to Achievement

AZRSA acknowledged our limited expertise in the public relations area and contracted with a leading marketing company in May 2007 to increase the awareness of the public VR Program. Due to recent budget reductions for 2008 this initiative has been curtailed.

Goal 1.3: Demonstrate accountability by serving more individuals with disabilities who achieve their employment goal in relation to increased state match.

1.3.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA has had an increase in the number of VR program applicants from 6,205 in FFY 2006 to 6,893 in FFY 2007 which reflects an 11% increase. Individuals with IPE's in FFY 2006 increased from 3,331 to 3,775 in FFY 2007 which resulted in an increase of 13%. This increase reflects the utilization of increased match funds available for client services. AZRSA FFY 2007 produced 2,096 employment outcomes which is a 4% increase from FFY 2006 which had 2,005 employment outcomes. AZRSA's 2008 FFY through June 30, 2008 has produced 1,458 successful closures, which is 70% of our goal for FFY 2008. With the increase in applicants and plans implemented, it is projected that the number of individuals achieving their employment outcomes will also improve significantly within the next 18 months.

Table 1.3 Employment Outcomes

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
# Applications	6,205	6,893	6,639
# Individuals with IPEs	3,331	3,775	2875
# Employment Outcomes	2,005	2,096	1,458

1.3.B Strategies Used

AZRSA continues with various outreach efforts with various community agencies, community service providers, and with consumer forums on a statewide basis in an effort to reach more individuals with disabilities who could benefit from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the services it provides.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with all high schools, including charter schools, is a statewide initiative which has been targeted for completion and is continuing to strengthen the presence of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in high schools so that students with

disabilities can access the program more productively. VR Counselor liaisons have been identified for each school to help increase the ease of referrals to the VR Program, as well as provide a direct link with a VR Counselor.

The WIA One-Stop Career Centers have continued on a statewide basis with the Department of Labor (DOL) AZRSA Disability Program Navigators (DPNs) assisting in making the WIA One-Stop Career Center services accessible for individuals with disabilities in their local communities.

Outreach efforts related to Job Fairs and Career Fairs are identified as follows:

- January 17, 2007 Tucson Newspaper Diversity Career Fair
- March 7, 2007 Northern Arizona University Career Day
- March 21, 2007 Arizona Workforce Connection Job Fair
- March 31, 2007 Arizona State University Collegiate Job Fair
- April 3, 2007 University of Arizona Spring Career Days
- April 18, 2007 *Jobing.com* Job Fair in Tucson
- May 16, 2007 *Jobing.com* Job Fair in Glendale
- August 1, 2007 *Jobing.com* Job Fair in Tucson
- August 8, 2007 *Jobing.com* Job Fair in Glendale
- September 22, 2007 Department Of Administration State Job Fair in Phoenix

AZRSA continues to work with the advertising and marketing firm, *RIESTER*, to increase communication and knowledge of the AZRSA VR Program. A revised Vocational Rehabilitation Program brochure was recently completed and distributed (February 2008). In addition to the brochure, an RSA poster was also completed and distributed to assist in advertising VR. Other marketing products currently in production include: RSA banners/posters for display in RSA offices and in other DES locations throughout the state, a new VR Orientation video/DVD featuring successful VR clients, and an online streaming vignette featuring the RSA Administrator advertising AZRSA's program of services on the Internet. Other AZRSA programmatic brochures are scheduled to be completed on transition and employer services.

A Memorandum of Understanding is currently in the process of being completed between AZRSA and the Veterans Administration (VA) to provide VR services to veterans that have been recently discharged from the military.

Consumer Forums were held in January, 2007 in the following locations: Flagstaff, Sierra Vista, Show Low, and Prescott Valley. They have been continued statewide throughout the year.

Community Rehabilitation Provider Forums have been held quarterly in different parts of the state as follows:

- March 16, 2007 Casa Grande

4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

- June 15, 2007 Camp Verde
- September 28, 2007 Tucson
- December 14, 2007 Mesa

Consumer Forums, as well as Community Rehabilitation Services Provider Forums continue to be conducted as follows on a statewide basis to increase the awareness of services to individuals with disabilities and public awareness.

- January 8, 2008 Deaf Town Hall Meeting in West Phoenix
- January 11, 2008 Deaf Town Hall Meeting in East Phoenix
- March 6, 2008 Community Rehabilitation Provider Meeting in Phoenix
- March 10, 2008 Stakeholder Meeting in location to be announced
- April 1, 2008 Ticket to Work Stakeholder Meeting in Phoenix
- April 10, 2008 Focus Group for Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Prescott Valley
- April 24, 2008 Public Hearing on the VR Policy Manual statewide

1.3.C Impediments to Achievement

AZRSA continues to have difficulty in hiring and retaining experienced VR Counselors experiencing a 13.78% turnover rate for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in FY 2007.

AZRSA referral sources are also experiencing staff turnover and agency contact changes resulting in the need for AZRSA to re-educate referral source staff.

The development of new office locations has been an ongoing issue due to the complexities involved in locating, opening, and implementing new office locations.

The perception of shortages of VR funding due to the State of Arizona's budget crisis and the freezing of all positions, except for direct service positions, has a negative effect on the VR Program.

The downturn in the economy is affecting the business community and the number of available jobs.

PRIORITY 2: STABILIZE THE WORKFORCE

Goal 2.1: Develop strategies to increase the retention rate of VR counselors.

2.1.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA's Recruitment and Retention Team and PETRA, which included AZRSA staff/students working on a graduate level university project(s) related to the area of retention of VR

Counselors, finished their study and recommendations. The PETRA group took the lead in the retention area related to VR Counselors/Supervisors by: completing an Employee Satisfaction survey on 234 VR Counselors both online and in person; conducting 10 focus groups statewide; conducting 2 exit surveys, and reviewing 102 files from the Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS); interviewing other states; and dialogued and speaking with 29 VR Supervisors. PETRA presented the results of their study to the AZRSA Management Team which summarized the fact that AZRSA was experiencing a low retention rate of VR Counselors. Several factors were identified such as low salary, lack of communication, and lack of recognition and support. Data from the survey was provided to the AZRSA Extended Management Team, AZRSA's Counselor Advisory Committee and others. AZRSA utilized this information to provide a catalyst to develop strategies and recommendations for improvement and set forth initiatives and completed actions related to VR Counselor salary raises, as well as other compensations related to qualified staff standards, a bilingual stipend, and Payment and Purchasing Technicians reclassification and additions. Other activities which have been initiated and completed which may impact retention include the upgrading of AZRSA staff computers and computer software, plus the availability of AZRSA Information Technology staff to provide needed guidance and trouble shooting assistance on a routine basis. The implementation of AZRSA's new web-based case management and reporting system, Libera System 7, will replace the legacy mainframe system, IRIS and the external case management and financial tracking system which will streamline case management activities for the VR Program. The completion of the new VR Policy Manual will provide streamlined easy access to the VR Policies and Procedures which the VR Counselor needs to use on an ongoing basis in order to serve VR clients. Training and professional leadership opportunities have continued and many specialized trainings have been conducted in order to provide relevant training to VR Counselors in the field. The Employee Performance Evaluation System (PASE) includes performance expectations and ratings for each category of VR Counselor performance in the following areas: VR Successful Closures, VR Plans written, and other VR job related components in order to clearly indicate to VR staff performance expectations and accountability standards. The reconfiguration of AZRSA Districts to more fully complement a statewide configuration and the subsequent filling of those positions and vacant VR Supervisory positions has improved communication, especially in the rural areas, within the agency. The AZRSA Extended Management Team holds monthly and quarterly meetings to advise staff regarding the latest changes and to discuss upcoming issues in an effort to increase communication.

2.1.B Strategies Used

Analysis of the FY 2007 AZRSA Employee Satisfaction Survey with the AZRSA Executive Management Team and developing an action plan with project team leaders to address the major issues identified such as Communication, Staff Recognition, Personnel, and Supervision.

A plan to include employee recognition, mentoring and professional leadership opportunities has been established.

Training opportunities are afforded to AZRSA VR Counselors, which increase skills and knowledge, as well as provide incentives for career advancement and higher education.

State of the art technology and accompanying equipment is supplied to AZRSA VR Counselors in order to assist them to more effectively and efficiently perform job tasks. Information Technology (IT) and Assistive Technology (AT) support personnel are also available to assist staff.

Addressing the complexity of the VR Counselor's job by creating the category of Purchasing and Payment Technicians in order to assist in the paying and purchasing functions related to the delivery of VR services enabling the VR Counselor to devote more time to the VR Counselor functions of the job.

The study and recommendations related to Recruitment and Retention area entitled "*A Counselor Driven Approach to the Retention of Qualified Staff for the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration*" completed in April 2007 by AZRSA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors enrolled in the Master's degree was reviewed by the AZRSA Extended Management Team and acted upon.

2.1.C Impediments to Achievement

Based on data from the American Institutes for Research in 2003, the average state Master's degree level VR counselor salary is \$38,979 (Chan, 2003)¹. AZRSA's VR Counselor recruitment rate (\$36,026), is still 7.6% below the national average.

Because salary is one of the factors impeding retention and recruitment of VR Counselors (Chan, 2003), it is imperative that AZRSA continually assess staff salaries and make adjustments to remain competitive in the labor marketplace.

Complexity of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor job responsibilities in relation to salary compensation continues to be an issue.

Goal 2.2: Improve AZRSA recruitment practices.

2.2.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA is making significant efforts to improve recruitment practices to hire VR Counselors and other support staff and has taken steps which include a more targeted recruiting process.

¹ Chan, Tsze. (2003). *Recruiting and Retaining Professional Staff in State VR Agencies: Some*

During FY 2007, five job fairs were held by AZRSA in conjunction with State Personnel in three of the largest Districts in the state (Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff), resulting in receiving many applications. For those candidates who did not meet qualified staff standards, a plan was developed to have them meet qualified staff standards upon their employment. Other recruitment efforts included: statewide job fairs; college and university career days; advertising in local newspapers, including those targeted to minority populations; participation in the National job bank; minority-focused employment sites; and listing openings on the AZRSA Website. AZRSA purchased advertising space in a variety of publications, such as the program brochure for the *National Rehabilitation Association 2007 Conference*.

A Recruitment/Personnel Task Group was formed to review the personnel process, identify barriers, and provide recommendations to improve the hiring process. DES personnel paperwork has been streamlined and can be completed electronically, resulting in faster approvals and speeding up the entire recruitment process. AZRSA has expedited the hiring of new VR Counselors and other direct service support staff through the Arizona State *Human Resources Hiring Gateway system*, which is an online system.

AZRSA staff attending the Post Employment Training in Rehabilitation (PETRA) Program at San Diego State University during FY 2007 continued working on a project, at the request of the AZRSA Administrator, to address the specific area of recruitment and retention. The purpose of the study was to focus on increasing the knowledge of factors contributing to the low retention rate of VR Counselors, especially qualified VR counselors. The outcomes of this study group included the following recommendations: a comprehensive review of VR Counselors' employee satisfaction, specific recommendations for improving employee satisfaction among the rehabilitation counseling staff, and a provision to continue periodic gathering of information regarding employee satisfaction and retention data. They suggested implementing methods for consistent tracking of information related to reasons counseling staff have terminated employment with AZRSA. Data from the study also showed that counseling staff needed enhanced recognition, support and communication by the administration. Specific recommendations included: reinstatement of the annual recognition conference, implementation of consistent use of employee recognition leave, provision of discretionary funds for DPM's to reward staff, revisions to the PASE evaluations to reflect the percentage of referrals regardless of the number that moved into plan status, and the implementation of local rewards.

2.2.B Strategies Used

AZRSA has partnered with ADOA Personnel to be included in all job fairs and hiring activities to increase recruitment and visibility. Due to the State of Arizona's recent hiring freeze, all job fairs have been put on hold.

AZRSA staff will continue the efforts to present at local college and university Career Days, especially at the three State Universities (UA in Tucson, ASU in Tempe and in other multi-campus sites, and NAU in Flagstaff).

AZRSA continues to develop relationships with local high schools, community colleges and universities to raise awareness of the Rehabilitation Counseling profession and increase marketing of AZRSA.

Increased marketing efforts by AZRSA, which includes the development and publication of a new VR brochure, banners/posters for display purposes, and a new orientation VR video/DVD, which is currently under production, have been useful tools for VR recruitment purposes and in advertising the VR Program.

AZRSA will continue purchasing advertising space in a variety of national publications, such as the program brochure for the *National Rehabilitation Association* and the *National Conference for Educators Conference*.

2.2.C Impediments to Achievement

The State of Arizona's hiring process, even though speeded up electronically through the *Human Resources Hiring Gateway system*, remains lengthy and bureaucratic.

Significant problems in finding qualified VR Counselor staff, especially in rural areas, continues to be an issue.

Salary issues continue to persist due to the complexity and responsibility of the position.

The State of Arizona's freeze on all positions, except for direct service positions, has created a shortage of AZRSA support positions.

Goal 2.3: Cover vacant caseloads within a 30 day time frame of the absence.

2.3.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA is continuing to ensure that vacant VR caseloads are covered.

2.3.B Strategies Used

The VR Supervisors have been able to assign vacant VR caseloads to other existing VR Counselors to ensure that VR client services are not interrupted.

The District Program Managers (DPMs) have been able to work closely with all the VR Supervisors to realign VR caseload activity to be more equitable within their Districts.

Recruitment of VR Counselors is being expedited through the direct hire authority authorized by the Arizona Department of Administration. This system is advantageous in that it speeds

up the hiring process by eliminating some of the personnel requirements, such eliminates the hiring list and the rule of interviewing a minimum of three candidates.

2.3.C Impediments to Achievement

AZRSA continues to have a substantial turnover in Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

New VR Counselors require intensive training in order to learn policy and procedure, as well as learn their roles and responsibilities.

Goal 2.4: Increase the overall job satisfaction of the AZRSA direct service employees from 64% to 69% by FY 2006, and increase to 75% by FY 2007.

2.4.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA's Annual Employee Satisfaction Survey for FY 2007 revealed the following key findings:

- 65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their job (17% of the responses indicated "neutral").*
- Over 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:
 - RSA supports my participation in training/education/professional development opportunities to improve my job skills (87%).
 - I understand clearly what is expected of me at work (80%).
 - I have the opportunity to learn and do new things in my job (79%).
- Under 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:
 - RSA has a good system in place for communicating necessary information to staff (41%).
 - I receive appropriate recognition for my work (43%).
 - RSA values my ideas on work related problems (46%).

The top six issues in order from most often mentioned to least:

1. Unclear, inconsistent or lack of communication
2. Positive comments
3. Supervision issues
4. Low pay/compensation issues
5. Lack appropriate equipment/space
6. Don't feel valued or recognized

The reporting of the 17% of the responses indicating "neutral" in relation to the question of job satisfaction represents a difference in calculation from previous survey methods.

2.4.B Strategies Used

The AZRSA Executive Management Team has developed an Action Plan as follows with four major categories detailing issues of concern in an effort to improve employee satisfaction.

Communication:

- Provide an ongoing monthly briefing to DPMs regarding changes and issues with contract services.
- Put out a reminder notice to staff that there is an online staff “suggestion box.” Develop a monitoring and follow-up system of suggestions received.
- Send out a memo to staff that information/action requests should have a minimum two-week turn around time. Less time for responses should be the exception.
- Put out a reminder notice to staff about existing email systems in place with guidelines and response policies.
- Develop a system for targeting emails to help manage email traffic and overload.
- Develop and implement a Procurement Manual and training on Procurement/Policy procedures and system for all AZRSA staff.
- Develop and implement a standard employee exit survey process for collecting, analyzing and reporting exit data.
- Complete the AZRSA Policy Manual and install final version of LIBERA with quarterly highlighted updates to assist in change tracking.
- Design and budget an AZRSA Internal/External Communications coordinator.

Staff recognition:

- Develop and disseminate communication to DPMs regarding availability and process for employee recognition.
- Determine agency-wide criteria for awarding employee recognition leave.
- Convene a meeting with AZRSA supervisors to review the issue of staff recognition and develop potential response strategies.
- Convene a Staff Recognition Task Force to help organize the annual recognition conference and to develop ongoing strategies to recognize staff. Possible ongoing recognition activities are: develop local rewards, i.e., “employee of the month” parking space, or provide DPMs with discretionary funds to reward staff.
- Develop training for supervisors and management on employee recognition.
- Select staff to receive recognition leave and awards.
- Hold annual recognition conference.

Personnel:

- Develop valid and reliable data report position vacancy and turnover rates for AZRSA overall and by districts and units.
- Refine and continue the implementation of an online annual employee satisfaction survey.
- Conduct an annual online staff satisfaction survey.
- Identify core competencies for all AZRSA staff, including ethics, multicultural sensitivity, customer service, and disability awareness.

Supervision:

- Develop an ongoing, competency-based supervisor training “academy”/system; include emphasis on caseload management and staff vacancy management.
- Develop a mentor program for new employees.
- Conduct Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program-San Diego State University (RCEP)-(SDSU) program training and select (25) AZRSA supervisors.

AZRSA continues to advocate for increased salaries for VR staff to continue to compete with the national average.

An educational/certification stipend of \$1,000 continues for current and new staff in specified classifications who meet the qualified staff standard for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

A \$1,000 bilingual stipend is offered to VR counselors who are fluent in a second language and who pass certification requirements.

Training opportunities are afforded to AZRSA VR Counselors, which increase skills and knowledge, as well as provide incentives for career advancement and higher education.

State of the art technology and accompanying equipment is supplied to AZRSA VR Counselors in order to assist them to more effectively and efficiently perform job tasks. Information Technology (IT) and Assistive Technology (AT) support personnel are also available to assist staff.

2.4.C Impediments to Achievement

Communication, improved office design and decrease of administrative functions continue to be issues that AZRSA constantly addresses in an effort to increase overall job satisfaction of its employees.

PRIORITY 3: ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROCESS

Goal 3.1: VR counselors will comply with AZRSA policies and procedures at or above 90% of the time, based on case reviews.

3.1.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA continues to work with VR Counselors to adhere to AZRSA policies and procedures at or above 90% of the time based on case reviews. In FFY 2006 AZRSA reviewed a total of 467 cases and reviewed 1,556 cases in FFY 2007. In FFY 2007 compliance with AZRSA policies and procedures was found to be at 89%. Due to the variety of instruments used in FFY 2006, a

standard compliance rate was unable to be calculated. Based upon VR Case Reviews in this area, results show that AZRSA VR Counselors are adhering to AZRSA Policies and Procedures as follows: for the first quarter of the FFY 2008 (October 1, 2007 through December 30, 2007), the compliance level was 83.1%. For the second quarter of the FFY 2008 (January 1, 2008 through March 31, 2008), the compliance level was 88%. AZRSA's goal is to meet the 90% compliance level and to set strategies to achieve this outcome.

Table 3.1A VR Case Reviews

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
# VR Cases reviewed	467	1,556	Unavailable
# Percentage Compliance	Unavailable	89%	Unavailable

3.1.B Strategies Used

Specific feedback based upon results of the VR Case Review will continue to be provided to VR Counselors and VR Supervisors.

Based on the findings of the VR Case Review, training will be provided in areas to address deficiencies.

Monitoring by VR Supervisors who are charged with the responsibility of reviewing five cases per VR Counselor per quarter will continue by District Program Managers.

District Program Managers are reviewing the results of the VR Supervisors' reviews of VR Counselor cases per quarter and tabulating the VR Case Review data per District.

AZRSA's new case management system, Libera, will enhance the ability to electronically manage and aggregate VR Case Review data statewide.

3.1.C Impediments to Achievement

AZRSA has had difficulty in this area because of a manpower shortage, and because of the State of Arizona's hiring freeze on administrative positions, which impacts vacancies in this area.

The Case Management System within AZRSA's Management Information System is not cohesive, as documentation is split between the computerized information system and the paper case file.

VR Case Review data has not been aggregated at this time.

Goal 3.2: Establish a baseline compliance measure of quality standards for contracted services.

3.2.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA has reviewed current contract monitoring practices and developed a new Draft *RSA Contract and Procurement Management Manual* which includes processes and procedures related to AZRSA's procurement and contract issues containing new contractual language to include additional accountability and efficiency measures. The newly-drafted AZRSA Contract Manual has been presented to an AZRSA Contracts Task group for review and has obtained feedback from the group for the purpose of revisions. The new AZRSA Contract Manual covers quality standards as defined in individual contracts as well as sections related to Legal and Policy Framework; Ethical and Professional Standards; RSA Procurement; Procurement Methods and RSA General Procurement Policy; RSA Contracts; Planning, Development, Management and Monitoring; Contract Development and Formalization; Contract Management; Contract Monitoring; Client Service; Procurement Process; Purchasing and Payment Technical Instructions; and Provider Standards and Selection: Registration Process.

New contract monitoring procedures and tools have been developed to ensure comprehensive reviews of AZRSA contractors and their performance. Two of the contracts monitoring staff were hired in the first half of SFY 2008; one Contract Monitor is responsible for Pima County and one Contract Monitor is responsible for contracts in Maricopa, Yuma, Gila, and Pinal Counties. Two additional Contract Monitors will be hired for the balance of state (these positions are currently not filled due to the State of Arizona's hiring freeze) to perform this function, which includes making scheduled on-site visits to each AZRSA Contractor in that county for the purpose of reviewing and monitoring contract compliance. A Contract Monitoring Analysis instrument/mechanism has been developed for this function and includes data being entered into a database for the purposes of analyzing of the outcomes of the contract monitoring. The results of the reviews performed by the contract monitoring staff from both the AZRSA Central Office and the field will be entered at a future date into the AZRSA contract monitoring database in preparation for the analysis. This analysis will be used to develop and refine quality of service delivery, and to expand and enhance service provision for AZRSA clients for the purposes of meeting AZRSA's Strategic goals. The functionality will be incorporated into AZRSA's new Libera case management system.

AZRSA is in the process of developing its own fee schedule for the majority of medically-related services. AZRSA has obtained permission from the Office of Procurement to establish its own rates and enter directly into contracts with qualified providers for some medically-related services. This procurement authority is based on the Arizona Revised Statute 41-1954 H.6 that gives AZRSA authority to establish its own rates for medically-related services. This is a lengthy process that requires a thorough analysis of the current market and finding methods for determining competitive rates and, at the same time, rates that AZRSA can financially afford. Once the rates are established, including the rationale for arriving at specific

rates, the AZRSA Contracts Unit will attempt to enter into contracts with qualified providers in the community to ensure quality service provision throughout the State of Arizona.

By December 31, 2008, AZRSA plans to have contracts in place for all major Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Program services, which are anticipated to result in expediting services, vendor accountability through compliance with service provision, and increased client satisfaction.

Methods related to Performance-Based Contracting have been developed and implemented in the Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot, which began June 1, 2007 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of Employment Services. This contract is statewide and includes job development and placement, work adjustment, and supported employment services. Through outcome-based contracting, AZRSA expects to achieve the following:

- Increase the number of successful rehabilitations and improve the rehabilitation rate.
- Ensure quality of job placements for its clients.
- Improve client satisfaction with achieved employment outcomes.
- Increase satisfaction of the community employers with services received from AZRSA contractors and increase the employers' active participation in the recruitment and placement of persons with disabilities into quality jobs.
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery by maximizing the usage of the existing resources.

The Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot is targeted for evaluation this year and will address the following evaluation deliverables: client satisfaction, employer satisfaction, AZRSA staff satisfaction, contractor satisfaction, placement rates and quality of placements, cost and result comparison. A wide range of service codes has been placed into the AZRSA IRIS Case Management System in order to provide a comprehensive tool for evaluation.

AZRSA is using the Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot, which has been authorized for a two-year period, in order to determine the feasibility of this type of an approach for all AZRSA contracts. The traditional employment services of job development and placement, work adjustment, and supported employment have continued to provide an objective basis for comparison. AZRSA will be contracting with an outside party for the evaluation component for these services.

3.2.B Strategies Used

Review of current contract monitoring practices and development of new contract and procurement procedures.

Development of new contract and procurement manual.

Development and implementation of new contract monitoring procedures.

Development and implementation of a contract monitoring analysis instrument.

Establishment of the baseline measures and qualitative analysis has not been fully developed. AZRSA is in the process of developing both.

Contracting and Evaluation of the Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot.

3.2.C Impediments to Achievement

The AZRSA new Draft Contract and Procurement Management Manual Contract Manual needs to be approved.

Before implementation, AZRSA staff must be trained.

AZRSA has had difficulty in this area because of a manpower shortage; also, the State of Arizona's hiring freeze on administrative positions impacts vacancies in this area.

To develop AZRSA's own fee schedule for the majority of medically-related services, a lengthy process is required:

1. Expertise/input at various management levels.
2. AZRSA is not a large user of the majority of medically-related services, and many providers may not have a financial interest in entering into contractual relations with AZRSA. Therefore, outreach efforts to the vendor community to increase awareness of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the service needs of clients is a necessity.
3. A large amount of man hours to prepare, issue, and award contracts.
4. These contracts will require ongoing monitoring of which AZRSA needs to find a solution.

Goal 3.3: Establish a quality management process to continually improve the agency's effectiveness and efficiency.

3.3.A Extent Achieved

The establishment of a quality management initiative to continually improve the agency's effectiveness and efficiency has been established. AZRSA has identified the following areas, and progress is as follows under each element identified.

1.) A Performance-Based Contracting System to pilot the service delivery of Employment Services to improve client outcomes in employment.

Methods related to Performance-Based Contracting have been developed and implemented in the Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot which began June 1, 2007 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of Employment Services. This contract is statewide

and includes job development and placement, work adjustment, and supported employment services. Through outcome based contracting AZRSA expects to achieve the following:

- Ensure quality of job placements for its clients.
- Improve client satisfaction with achieved employment outcomes.
- Increase satisfaction of the community employers with services received from AZRSA contractors and increase the employers' active participation in the recruitment and placement of persons with disabilities into quality jobs.
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery by maximizing the usage of the existing resources.

The Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot is targeted for evaluation this year and will address the following evaluation deliverables: client satisfaction, employer satisfaction, AZRSA staff satisfaction, contractor satisfaction, placement rates and quality of placements, and cost and result comparison. A wide range of service codes have been placed into the AZRSA IRIS Case Management System in order to provide a comprehensive tool for evaluation.

AZRSA is using the Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot, which has been authorized for a two year period in order to determine the feasibility of this type of an approach for all of AZRSA contracts. The traditional employment services of job development and placement, work adjustment, and supported employment have continued to provide an objective basis for comparison. AZRSA will be contracting with an outside party for the evaluation component for these services.

2.) Development/customization of a new web-based case management system to update and improve the AZRSA case management system.

AZRSA continues to work with our vendor partner, Libera Inc., on the implementation of the new web-based case management and reporting system Libera System 7, to replace the legacy mainframe system, IRIS and the external case management and financial tracking system for Independent Living, IL FACTS. The AZRSA work teams have completed the forms gap analysis phase and have begun unit testing. Two pilot offices will be trained in June and the pilot will continue until October, 2008. The new application has been deployed in the DES e-gov in a dual-mode, and is available from both the Intranet and Internet for internal and external users. Twenty vendors have signed Data Sharing Agreements (DSA) with AZRSA and will be trained during July and August, 2008 on how to enter their reports and submit billings for services provided to AZRSA consumers of the Older Blind Program. The newly-revised Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Policy Manual has been loaded into the Libera System 7 and the AZRSA Policy and Training Unit completed statewide training in April, 2008. This gave AZRSA staff an opportunity to be exposed to the application and learn how to navigate using the VR Policy Manual as a training tool prior to implementation of the full case management application pieces.

AZRSA has additionally purchased licenses for an additional Libera System 7 module for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). BEP staff were trained on the case management functionality and went live in May, 2008. The financial piece of the BEP system will be implemented in July, 2009.

Additionally, the AZRSA Libera system has incorporated the Client Index File (CIF) application, which tracks client and programmatic data for all DES clients and the services they receive throughout the Department. CIF has replaced the previous High Level Client Index (HLCI) system.

3.) Development of a new contract manual, including a consistent monitoring approach for measuring programmatic and cost effectiveness.

AZRSA has reviewed current contract monitoring practices and developed a new Draft RSA Contract and Procurement Management Manual, which includes processes and procedures related to AZRSA's procurement and contract issues containing new contractual language to include additional accountability and efficiency measures. The newly drafted AZRSA Contract Manual has been presented to an AZRSA Contracts Task group for review and has obtained feedback from the group for the purpose of revisions. The new AZRSA Contract Manual covers quality standards as defined in individual contracts as well as sections related to Legal and Policy Framework; Ethical and Professional Standards; RSA Procurement, which covers Procurement Methods and RSA General Procurement Policy; RSA Contracts; Planning, Development, Management and Monitoring, Contract Development and Formalization; Contract Management; Contract Monitoring; Client Service; Procurement Process; Purchasing and Payment Technical Instructions; Provider Standards and Selection, and Registration Process. Currently, revisions are in the process of being incorporated in the draft AZRSA Contract Manual, which will go out for final comments in the near future.

4.) Outreach initiatives will continue with the Youth and School to Work programs, the Veteran's Administration and the Workforce Investment Programs, including One-Stop Career Centers.

A MOU is in the process of being completed with the VA in order to partner more closely in providing VR services to veterans who have been injured. MOU's with high schools, including charter schools, and institutions of higher education are in the process of completion, as well as a VR Counselor identified as a liaison for each high school, actively participating in high school campus activities. AZRSA's Disability Navigator Program continues to be a systems change agent in WIA One-Stop Career Centers, continuing to improve accessibility for individuals with disabilities in their local communities on a statewide basis. Service integration will continue with DES internal agencies, as well as with community partners to enhance services to individuals with disabilities throughout Arizona.

5.) Program Evaluation/Continuous Improvement activities to include systematic case reviews, monitoring, and compliance activities.

AZRSA continuous improvement activities related to case practices have been implemented, resulting in an analysis of VR cases in Status 10 and a decision which resulted in a decrease of 900 VR clients in Status 10 in FY 2007. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are being encouraged to further utilize Status 10 to thoroughly determine goals and individual needs as part of the process for developing the IPE.

- A Status 28 project study was also completed, analyzing the reasons for unsuccessful closures, contributing factors, and strategies for improvement.
- VR Policy changes have resulted in the following improvements:
 - A change in VR Policy to include the requirement that VR Counselors contact VR clients at least once every 90 days has been implemented.
 - The decision to set timelines for IPE closures to 120 days was implemented.
 - The 60-day VR eligibility requirement has been put into action (making sure that a waiver is in the VR case file for any cases over the 60-day timeframe)
 - Supervisors will ensure that all vacant caseloads have coverage within 30 days of vacancy.

An Arizona Training Practicum Project was initiated on January 26, 2007 for VR Counselors. Follow-up sessions were held one day a month from February through April for VR Counselors without Master's degrees. RCEP in conjunction with the San Diego State University (SDSU) Interwork Institute designed this project to assist VR Counselors with continued development of their counseling skills through interaction and analysis exercises.

AZRSA initiated a statewide pilot on Performance Based Contracting for Employment Related Services (June 1, 2007), which includes job development and placement, work adjustment, and supported employment services. Currently, there are 23 private sector contractors providing services under the Pilot statewide. Through outcome-based contracting, AZRSA expects to achieve the following:

- Increase the number of successful rehabilitations and improve the rehabilitation rate.
- Ensure quality of job placements for its clients.
- Improve client satisfaction with achieved employment outcomes.
- Increase satisfaction of the community employers with services received from AZRSA contractors and increase the employers' active participation in the recruitment and placement of persons with disabilities into quality jobs.
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery by maximizing the usage of the existing resources.

AZRSA has contracted with an outside party to complete the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Performance Based Contracting for Employment Related Services Pilot. The evaluation should be completed and results received in October 2008.

AZRSA continues to work with VR Counselors to adhere to AZRSA policies and procedures at or above 90% of the time based on case reviews. Based upon VR Case Reviews in this area, results show that AZRSA VR Counselors are adhering to AZRSA Policies and Procedures as follows: In FFY 2007 compliance with AZRSA policies and procedures was found to be at 89%. Due to the variety of instruments used in FFY 2006, a standard compliance rate was unable to be calculated. For the first quarter of the FFY 2008 (October 1, 2007 through December 30, 2007), the compliance level was 83.1%. For the second quarter of FFY 2008 (January 1, 2008 through March 30, 2008), the compliance level was 88%. VR Supervisors continue to review five VR cases per quarter per VR Counselor working in each office, and District Program Managers are reviewing the results and tabulating the VR Case Review data.

In FFY 2006 AZRSA reported average hourly wage of \$10.13 while in FFY 2007, average hourly wage was \$10.65. The hours worked per week in FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 remained the same at 33 hours per week. Individuals receiving employer paid benefits increased from 768 in FFY 2006 to 794 in FFY 2007. The average time for eligibility determination increased to 41.78 days in FFY 2007 from 41.14 days in FFY 2006. The average time for IPE development in FFY 2007 increased to 107.56 days from 88.56 days in FFY 2006. The average time between application and employment outcome increased in FFY 2007 to 698.95 days from 652.75 days in FFY 2006. These measures and outcomes are continuously under review and monitoring.

6.) A new Advertising and Marketing Initiative by AZRSA to utilize the services of a professional marketing firm to create a new image and “branding” of agency publications for use with the public, consumers, employers, elected officials, and other state and local agencies involved in working with individuals with disabilities.

AZRSA contracted in May, 2007 with the full-service advertising and marketing firm, *RIESTER SONORAN LLC* (RIESTER), which has an Arizona statewide contract for marketing services in order to increase marketing efforts and visibility of the AZRSA VR Program, as well as its other programs and services. This includes development of agency-specific program brochures, focus groups with AZRSA stakeholders, various media and marketing tools, banners, posters, etc. To date, a Vocational Rehabilitation Program brochure has been completed and distributed (February 2008) and an AZRSA poster to assist in advertising VR. Other marketing products currently in production include: AZRSA banners/posters for display in AZRSA offices and in other DES locations throughout the state, a new VR Orientation video/DVD featuring successful VR clients started production in May, 2008, and an on-line streaming vignette featuring the AZRSA Administrator advertising AZRSA’s VR Program and services on the Internet. Other AZRSA programmatic brochures are scheduled to be completed on transition and employer services.

Table 3.3 Job Placements

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)

4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

# Job Placements (status 26)	2,005	2,096	1,458
Avg. hourly wage	\$10.13	\$10.65	\$11.55
# Hours worked per week	33 hrs.	33 hrs.	33 hrs.
# Individuals with employer paid benefits (medical insurance)	768	794	615
Avg. time for eligibility determination	41.14 days	41.78 days	38.19 days
Avg. time for IPE development	88.56 days	107.56 days	103.55 days
Avg. time between application & employment outcome	652.75 days	698.95 days	642.50 days

3.3.B Strategies Used

AZRSA is continuing to work closely with the Office of Procurement to streamline the process for increased responsiveness to client service needs through contracts and purchasing activities.

A newly-developed AZRSA Contract and Procurement Management Manual that includes processes and procedures related to AZRSA's procurement and contract issues has been drafted, reviewed for comment, and will be revised accordingly.

Management information reports for each District are produced and reviewed monthly by the AZRSA Management Team.

Monitoring by District Program Managers and VR Supervisors will continue in the VR case review area. The approved VR Case Review form has been added to the new web-based Libera Case Management System so that VR Supervisors will be able to complete their reviews online without having to create an external database. Management will be able to track compliance by VR caseload and VR Counselor, as well as by office, district, and statewide. Reports are available for the entire instrument or by specific item.

Specific feedback based upon the results of the VR Case Reviews will continue to be provided to the VR Counselor and VR Supervisors.

Outreach activities will continue as follows: the Veterans Administration, and a MOU is in the process of being completed with the VA in order to partner more closely in providing VR services to veterans who have been injured; MOUs with high schools, including charter schools, and institutions of higher education are in the process of completion; service integration will continue with DES internal agencies, as well as with community partners.

Marketing/advertising initiatives will continue to assist AZRSA in creating a more positive image with the public, increase awareness, and increase referrals to the VR Program.

The results of the Performance Based Contracting Pilot are on target to be evaluated this year to determine the implications for future contracting purposes.

3.3.C Impediments to Achievement

State of Arizona Procurement Rules and Regulations impact the ability of AZRSA to contract and procure goods in an expeditious manner due to their rules and regulations.

The delay in finalizing the AZRSA Procurement rules has had a serious impact on the development of the new Libera Case Management System, since many business rules cannot be finalized until forms and procedures in the area of purchasing are finalized.

AZRSA has had difficulty in staffing several programmatic areas such as the Program Evaluation Unit, as well as the Contracts and Procurement Unit due to the State of Arizona's current freeze on all positions, except direct service positions, due to the 2008 budget crisis.

Due to the State of Arizona's budgetary issues, funding resources affecting the VR Program will necessitate a more stringent review process by the department and the AZRSA marketing activities. Other activities may need to be curtailed for the future.

There are concerns about the "Help Desk" support function for the new system. At the present time there is one vacancy on the IRIS Help Desk that cannot be filled due to the State of Arizona's hiring freeze. Early next year when the new Libera System is brought up, it is anticipated that AZRSA will need at least five additional "Help Desk" support personnel to handle the calls and questions related to the new system.

Systems within AZRSA and other departmental systems are not fully integrated in order to enable cross-referrals, and retrieval of data from one system to another in order to fully expedite services.

Goal 3.4: Develop a VR counselor feedback system using consumer satisfaction surveys.

3.4.A Extent Achieved

The AZRSA surveyed the clients of VR services to determine their level of satisfaction with services provided and the results from the *SFY VR Client Satisfaction Survey Executive Summary* are as follows: The areas measured were satisfaction with: 1) decision making and making choices; 2) appropriateness, timeliness, and quality of services; 3) the job obtained as a result of VR services, and; 4) overall satisfaction.

Methods

A new survey instrument was developed and distributed to clients in FY 2006 and FY 2007. The survey period was from July, 2006 through June, 2007, which encompassed the State Fiscal Year. Surveys were mailed to clients who moved into one of the following statuses during the course of the year: 1) clients who started their rehabilitation plan of services (status 13); 2) clients who closed as successful (status 26); 3) clients who closed as unsuccessful

after receiving services under a rehabilitation plan (status 28). The surveys were coded with the client case identification number at the bottom and were individually addressed on the cover letter. Clients were informed in the cover letter that the survey was confidential, but not anonymous. Following an initial mailing of the survey to clients, an additional mailing was sent if there was no response. Initial surveys were mailed to 3,003 clients.

Results

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the clients surveyed returned a completed survey (842 returned). This is lower than the return rate for the prior year by 10%. Table 1 indicates the results of each rated question.

TABLE 1. Percent Satisfied

Question	SFY07
Overall	83.4%
Involvement/Choice	85.8%
Appropriate Services	78.0%
Counselor Listening Skills	83.2%
Informed of Rights/Responsibilities	86.9%
Counselor Follow Up	82.9%
Job Obtained	59.8%

Eighty-three percent 83.4% of all respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied overall with the services they received, which is a 1% increase compared to last year's 82.3%. Only 17% of respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied overall with the services they received.

Respondents to the survey averaged an 83.4% overall satisfaction rating regarding interaction with their VR Counselor regarding involvement with decisions and choices in their VR plan, listening to their needs and concerns, being informed of their rights and responsibilities, providing counseling and guidance, and attentiveness to returning calls and emails.

The last job obtained as a result of receiving VR services was the lowest area of satisfaction indicated by respondents at 59.8%. This is a decrease in comparison to the previous year's 83%.

In the specific responses to the open-ended questions, clients most frequently mentioned the positive interaction and professionalism of VR Counselors as aspects of services they liked best. The most frequently-reported specific element that clients indicated could be improved was training that was specific to the client's needs and that instructor-led training was preferred in comparison to training that was via the internet or other self-taught sources.

AZRSA continues to utilize VR Consumer Satisfaction Surveys as an ongoing mechanism to improve services to VR clients and reviews the results of the VR Consumer Satisfaction Surveys with the AZRSA Management Team as well as with VR Supervisors. The development of a VR Counselor feedback system using the VR Consumer Satisfaction surveys has not been completed at this juncture, due to staff vacancies in this area.

3.4.B Strategies Used

AZRSA is in the process of developing the additional component to merge the VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey with the development of a VR counselor feedback system.

3.4.C Impediments to Achievement

AZRSA has had a significant manpower shortage in the Program Evaluation Unit area, and with the State of Arizona's freeze on administrative positions, no positions in this area have been able to be filled.

PRIORITY 4: INCREASE VR SUCCESS RATE

Goal 4.1: Reduce the number of unsuccessful closures.

4.1.A Extent Achieved

In FFY 2006, the number of unsuccessful closures of VR clients was 2,267. In FFY 2007, the number of unsuccessful closures of VR clients was 1,881 which reflects a 17% decrease. Through June 30, 2008, the number of unsuccessful closures is 1,563. If this trend continues, it is anticipated that AZRSA will be above last year's number for unsuccessful closures.

4.1.B Strategies Used

AZRSA is continuing to work on reducing the number of unsuccessful closures by utilizing strategies identified to improve in this area.

AZRSA has completed several studies related to "28" closures and has analyzed some of the leading causes for unsuccessful closure, including loss of client contact (43%), high staff turnover, and client choice. Therefore, additional contact information has been incorporated into the Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS) Data Base Program in an effort to maintain contact with VR clients and /or their designated liaison, and VR Counselors are being encouraged to utilize these fields. The new VR client case management system, Libera, will utilize technology allowing the VR Counselor to structure and maintain client contact. This will be accomplished through several means:

- The first will be structured by the Pre-Defined Queries (PDQs) deemed as most important by not only the VR Counselors and Supervisors, but by RSA Management and Administration.
- The second method allows for VR Counselors to set their own PDQs, which will remind them to update the client's contact information after each correspondence.

Continuous improvement strategies include District Program Managers (DPMs), Assistant Program Managers, and Supervisors more actively monitoring the monthly production reports related to unsuccessful closures and taking appropriate action.

- AZRSA will research the feasibility of developing an electronic benefits calculator system for VR clients to fully understand the impact of work on their benefits.

VR Policy and Procedure changes have included:

- AZRSA has made a change in policy to include the requirement that the VR Counselor contact the VR client at least once every 90 days.
- AZRSA has put in place a mechanism that all vacant caseloads will have coverage after 30 days of the vacancy.
- AZRSA has revised policies to discontinue partial plans and to focus instead on using "Status 06" where appropriate and on the expansion of services in "Status 10" for comprehensive planning.
- Other recommendations include making sure the client is ready to identify a firm vocational goal leading towards employment before the initiation of a plan, and also increase the use of "benefits counseling." AZRSA has completed a new contract for Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA), which replaces the previous contract, entitled Benefits Counseling, and these contracts became effective April 1, 2008. The following contracts are in place throughout the state for this service: Arizona Bridge for Independent Living (ABIL) in Phoenix; Services Maximizing Independent Living and Empowerment (SMILE) in Yuma; DIRECT Independent Living Center in Tucson; and New Horizons Independent Living Center in Prescott. AZRSA is directing VR Counselors through VR Policy and Procedures to encourage clients to utilize this service prior to the implementation of their Individual Plan for Employment in order to have VR clients more effectively realize the impact of employment on their benefits.

The Region IX Regional Continuing Education Program (RCEP) is going to offer the *Counselor Practicum* again, with one group in Phoenix, where there are the most new VR Counselors.

The Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot is targeted for evaluation this year and will address the following evaluation deliverables: client satisfaction; employer satisfaction;

AZRSA staff satisfaction; contractor satisfaction; placement rates and quality of placements; cost and result comparison.

4.1.C Impediments to Achievement

Manpower shortage due to retention of experienced VR Counselors is affecting this goal.

AZRSA's ability to obtain solid secondary contact information because of the transient nature of the population base.

AZRSA needs to more effectively utilize career planning tools in the development of consumer goals.

AZRSA needs to more effectively utilize "benefits counseling" prior to the implementation of plans.

The need for AZRSA to minimize VR caseload size prior to the conversion to Libera, the new case management system, will have a detrimental effect related to this goal, since VR Counselors are being encouraged to close VR cases that have been in an inactive status for a long period of time. Due to Procurement and Contracting oversight and restrictive procedures, AZRSA's ability to procure and provide services in a timely manner is being affected and opportunities for clients are being hampered.

Goal 4.2: Improve the effectiveness of the AZRSA VR service delivery process for all individuals, especially individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who are minorities.

4.2.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA has strived to improve the effectiveness of the AZRSA VR service delivery process of serving individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who are minorities by conducting outreach activities that target ethnic and racial minority populations. Between FFY 2006 and FFY 2007, AZRSA, in the category of most significant disabilities, displayed an increase in the number of referrals from 3,300 to 3,442 and applications from 3,338 to 3,428. In the area of eligibility determinations, AZRSA experienced a decrease from FFY 2006 of 3,372 to 3,270 in FFY 2007. In the area of IPE development an increase from FFY 2006 of 2,426 to 2,448 in FFY 2007 occurred. In the area of employment outcomes, an increase from FFY 2006 of 1,195 to 1,240 in FFY 2007 occurred. In the area of rehabilitation rate, an increase from FFY 2006 of 45% to FFY 2007 of 50% occurred. Average time to implement an IPE went from 108.15 days in FFY 2006 to 119.06 days in FFY 2007.

Between FFY 2006 and FFY 2007, AZRSA, in the category of persons who are minorities, displayed a decrease in the number of referrals from 1,925 to 1,857 and applications from 1,846 to 1,741. In the area of eligibility determinations, AZRSA experienced a decrease from FFY 2006 of 1,589 to 1,393 in FFY 2007. In the area of IPE development a decrease from

FFY 2006 of 965 to 854 in FFY 2007 occurred. In the area of employment outcomes, an increase from FFY 2006 of 573 to 613 in FFY 2007 occurred. In the area of rehabilitation rate, an increase from FFY 2006 of 50% to FFY 2007 of 53% occurred. Average time to implement an IPE went from 116.44 days in FFY 2006 to 126.55 days in FFY 2007.

AZRSA has strived to improve the effectiveness of the AZRSA VR service delivery process of serving individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who are minorities by conducting outreach activities that target ethnic and racial minority populations increasing overall VR Program referrals by 32% as of June 30, 2008 as compared to FFY 2007. In FFY 2007 and FFY 2008 AZRSA served diverse ethnic groups in proportion to their rate of occurrence in the general population. In FFY 2008 there is a slight increase in VR clients served in the African American, and American Indian and Alaskan Native ethnic populations. Improvements in the service delivery process include shortening the average time frame to implement an Individualized Plan for Employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities by 22.4% and shortening the average time frame to implement an IPE for individuals who are minorities by 41.4%. AZRSA is committed to increased outreach efforts targeted to individuals with disabilities who are of a minority status. AZRSA is continuing to develop and implement strategies to increase the number of all minority applicants and successful rehabilitations to help close any disparity in service provision to Arizona's diverse populations.

Table 4.2 A. Persons with the Most Significant Disabilities

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
# Referrals	3,300	3,442	2,999
# Applications	3,338	3,428	3,055
# Eligibility determinations	3,372	3,270	3,107
# IPE development	2,426	2,448	1,762
# Employment outcomes	1,195	1,240	737
Rehabilitation rate	45%	50%	44%
Avg. time to implement IPE (from elig)	108.15	119.06	97.26

Table 4.2 B. Persons who are Minorities

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
# Referrals	1,925	1,857	958
# Applications	1,846	1,741	907
# Eligibility determinations	1,589	1,393	704
# IPE development	965	854	393
# Employment outcomes	573	613	495
Rehabilitation rate	50%	53%	49%
Avg. time to implement IPE (from elig)	116.44	126.55	89.48

4.2.B Strategies Used

Development of a marketing/advertising plan for increased visibility and outreach to solicit public awareness in the community, especially to those individuals with the most significant disabilities and of various minority backgrounds has been undertaken with the hiring of a leading marketing firm, *RIESTER SONARAN LLC*.

Marketing strategies include the development of an orientation video which will include minorities with disabilities, and the production availability in Spanish, ASL, Open Captioning, and with Descriptive Video. Brochures and publications related to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program have been developed in Spanish and in alternative formats.

VR Counselors receive education and training in cultural and social sensitivity through AZRSA and its partners such as the Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) and the University of Arizona Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling Program.

Except for state contracts and other special circumstances, Arizona laws require that when practicable, state government purchases up to \$50,000 shall be made from small businesses. State agencies must request at least one quote from a small, minority- owned, or female-owned business. A small business is defined as one with less than 100 employees, or less than \$ 4.0 million in annual sales.

Community outreach activities have included focus groups, consumer forums, community provider meetings on a statewide basis for clients, advocates, local agencies and individuals with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. AZRSA has participated in the Annual Campesino Sin Fronteras fair (day of the seasonal farm worker) where information about the Vocational Rehabilitation Program was provided to farm workers and their families.

AZRSA continues to recruit and hire staff of diverse ethnic backgrounds and presently gives a salary incentive for those with bilingual language skills.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been established by AZRSA with five Tribal Nation Section 121-VR Grant projects (Fort Mohave, Navajo Nation, Tohono O'Odham, White Mountain Apache, and Hopi). AZRSA District Program Managers are actively working with each tribal entity to coordinate and provide VR case planning with tribal members, which is an ongoing process.

AZRSA is working with the Migrant Farm Worker Coalition, focusing on improved outreach to minority populations, and has added a VR Counselor to primarily serve minority populations, in the San Luis and Somerton areas of Arizona, which has a high proportion of migrant seasonal farm workers. AZRSA is also working in partnership with the Employment Administration staff under the State of Arizona Wagner-Peyser Agricultural Services Plan to assist in empowering

migrant and seasonal farm workers with career and labor market decisions, which is consistent with their strength and abilities to obtain employment.

Implementation of VR Policies and Procedures to include specific time frames for IPE development.

4.2.C Impediments to Achievement

AZRSA recognizes the need to continue to perform outreach and marketing efforts to improve the effectiveness of the AZRSA VR service delivery process for all individuals, especially individuals with the most significant disabilities and individuals who are minorities. Resources impacting this area significantly include: manpower shortages, especially in the rural communities; the limited availability of service providers; and bureaucratic processes making it difficult for minority populations to participate.

Goal 4.3: Improve VR performance as measured by the Federal Standards and Indicators.

4.3.A Extent Achieved

Performance Indicator 1-Number of Successful Employment Outcomes

In FFY 2006 AZRSA had 2,005 individuals with disabilities successfully achieving an employment outcome. In FFY 2007, AZRSA had 2,096 individuals with disabilities successfully achieving an employment outcome resulting in a 4% increase. As of June 30, 2008 there were 1,458 successful rehabilitations recorded. It is anticipated that AZRSA will be able to meet or exceed the previous performance period.

Performance Indicator 2-Percent Employed (rehabilitation rate)

In FFY 2006 AZRSA's rehabilitation rate was 47%%. In FFY 2007, the rehabilitation rate for AZRSA was 53% which reflects a 6% increase. The minimum federal standard is 55.8%. As of June 30, 2008, the rehabilitation rate was 48.3%. AZRSA has continued this year to close VR cases that have been inactive for prolonged periods of time as a way to prepare for electronic conversion to AZRSA's new case management system, and it is anticipated that the rehabilitation rate will remain below the federal standard.

Performance Indicator 3-Employed Competitively

In FFY 2006 the percentage of individuals working in competitive employment settings was 92%. In FFY 2007, the percentage of individuals working in competitive employment settings was 95.3% which reflects a 3% increase. As of June 30, 2008 the percentage of individuals working in competitive employment settings was 94.4%. AZRSA continues to exceed the minimum performance standard in this area. The minimum federal standard is 72.6%.

Performance Indicator 4-Employed Competitively-Significant Disability

In FFY 2006 the percentage of individuals with significant disabilities working in competitive settings was 98%. In FFY 2007, the percentage of individuals with significant disabilities working in competitive settings was 96% which has resulted in a decrease of 2%. As of June 30, 2008, the percentage of individuals with significant disabilities was at 91.8%. The minimum federal standard is 62.4%. It is anticipated that AZRSA will continue to exceed the minimum performance standard in this area.

Performance Indicator 5-Earnings Ratio

In FFY 2006 AZRSA maintained the ratio of average hourly wage of individuals rehabilitated to average wage in the state at 0.57. In FFY 2007, AZRSA maintained the ratio of average hourly wage of individuals rehabilitated to average wage in the state at 0.59 which reflects a .02 increase. As of June 30, 2008, the ratio was 0.63 thus exceeding the minimum standard. The federal minimum requirement is 0.52.

Performance Indicator 6-Self-Support

In FFY 2006 AZRSA's percentage increase of individuals who report monthly wages as their primary source of income was 69%. In FFY 2007, AZRSA's percentage increase of individuals who report monthly wages as their primary source of income was 71% resulting in a 2% increase. As of June 30, 2008, the percentage of individuals reporting monthly wages as primary source of income was 64.0%, which continues to exceed the federal minimum requirement of 53%.

Standard 2.-Equal Access to Services

In FFY 2006 AZRSA's ratio of the service rate for minorities to the service rate for non-minorities was at 0.90. In FFY 2007, AZRSA's ratio of the service rate for minorities to the service rate for non-minorities was at .875 which is a decrease of 0.025. As of June 30, 2008 the ratio reported was 0.872. AZRSA continues to exceed the federal minimum requirement of 0.80.

Table 4.3 Federal Standards and Indicators

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
Indicator 1-Number of Successfully Employed Outcomes	2,005	2,096	1,458
Indicator 2-Percent Employed (rehab rate)	47.1%	52.7%	48.3%
Indicator 3-Employed Competitively	92.4%	95.3%	94.4%
Indicator 4-Employed Competitively-Significant Disability	97.9%	95.8%	91.8%
Indicator 5-Earnings Ratio	0.57	0.59	0.63
Indicator 6-Self-Support	68.9%	70.9%	64.0%

4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

Standard 2-Equal Access to Services	0.90	.875	0.872
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4.3.B Strategies Used

Communication with VR Counselors regarding progress related to performance standards and indicators on a monthly basis has been targeted. A greater emphasis has been put in place in regards to best practices for special target populations i.e., blind and visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing, and serious mental illness.

AZRSA has established a baseline for VR Counselors to meet specific standards related to Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) written, successful rehabilitation closures, and community outreach activities. These standards continue to be incorporated into each Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's Annual Employee Performance Evaluation.

Training in the areas of Vocational Counseling and Guidance, Career Assessment and Assistive Technology have been provided to VR Counselors to better understand a client's personal factors.

Outreach and marketing efforts targeting minority consumers such as migrant seasonal farm workers.

An increase in the development of marketing initiatives and materials to the general public to increase awareness and visibility of the AZRSA Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and to promote the agency as a resource to individuals with disabilities has been happening.

4.3.C Impediments to Achievement

The goal has been achieved; however, AZRSA strives for continuous improvement in the areas related to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program's performance, as measured by Federal Standards and Indicators.

Goal 4.4: Expand and improve the availability of assistive technology services and devices for effective participation in the rehabilitation program.

4.4.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA used monies set aside for innovation and expansion projects to develop and expand resources with the state, which have included the area of assistive technology (AT). These projects expanded AT in the following areas: client and staff resources areas; technical assistance available to staff; the establishment of a statewide website with resource information; and the procedures and protocols for the delivery of assistive technology.

AZRSA has, in conjunction with community partners, developed an innovative and highly visible undertaking called, "THINK Accessibility". The THINK Accessibility team participates in

job fairs and career expos providing direct accommodations for job seekers as well as extensive on-site disability resource information and hands-on technology for employers and other participants. Disability Program Navigators demonstrate products and provide technical assistance about assistive technologies available in WIA One-Stop Career Centers. Provision of mobility equipment (scooters and wheelchairs), sighted guide, electronic and large print access to exhibitor listings, products for the deaf and hard of hearing including frequency modulation (FM) systems and wireless face-to-face communication devices (Ubi-Duo), and resume review with assistive technology supports (screen reading/screen magnification/refreshable Braille) have been well-received by event planners, job seekers, employers and community partners.

Assistive technologies in both comprehensive and select satellite One-Stop Career Centers have been upgraded to current software versions. AZRSA Assistive Technology/Information Technology (AT/IT) staff continue to provide technical assistance to IT staff managing adaptive computer systems in One-Stops to reduce conflicts and improve product access for consumers.

New contracts in the areas of adaptive driving evaluation, home modifications, and vehicle modifications have improved services for consumers in those areas of need.

A contract has been developed to manage www.ATarizona.com, a repository for statewide assistive technology information related to AZRSA activities. Assistive Technology training activities for AZRSA staff and One-Stop partners has been expanded to include an extensive array of hands-on AT trainings and technical assistance.

Table 4.4 Assistive Technology Outcomes

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
# Assistive Technology Assessments	541	699	542
# Assistive Technology Services	2,371	3,327	2,444

4.4.B Strategies Used

Throughout the VR process, evaluation and provision of AT training and devices to VR clients as necessary to benefit from VR services. New best practices in assistive technology have been developed and approved in the area of blindness/visual impairment, which specifies expectations and specific roles of consumers, providers and VR Counselors in the provision of assistive technology throughout the course of the VR plan.

Provision of specialized AT equipment to VR clients, VR offices, and to One-Stop Career Centers Statewide.

Education of employers on the benefits of AT and the provision of technical assistance.

AZRSA has increased Assistive Technology specialist staff supporting/coordinating VR client-related AT supports from one staff to two full time equivalency staff (FTE).

Continued training for VR clients, staff, employers, and others as sponsored by the co-sponsorship of "AT in the Saguaro," a comprehensive AT conference that educates staff and clients in new advances in AT. Support of a computer lab for training in the use of Arizona Virtual One-Stop Internet based registration and job search database, using AT products typically found in One-Stop Career Center locations.

Provision of Master's Level Certificate Program that gives AZRSA employees a Master's Certificate in AT, which is in-depth and gives global expertise in the AT area. Scholarships for staff in this program have increased to eight participants this year.

Specialized programs - AZRSA offers five Comprehensive Adjustment Programs serving adults who are blind and visually impaired, which include both training and provision of AT for employment purposes.

Increase availability and use of assistive technology devices to VR clients through the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP).

4.4.C Impediments to Achievement

AZRSA manpower shortage in this area. AZRSA is severely affected by a shortage of community providers in the area of assistive technology. Low fee schedule rates do not support the development of community providers to serve consumers.

Contract and fee schedule Community Service Providers - lack of availability of credentialed AT professionals in the field, especially in rural areas to provide AT consultation, evaluations, training, and installation.

Goal 4.5: Improve referrals and increase collaboration within local communities for youth with disabilities in transition.

4.5.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA continues to work strengthening its collaboration within local communities in order to improve referrals in an effort to serve more youth with disabilities in transition programs statewide. AZRSA referrals from School To Work and Youth Transition Programs (YTP) statewide from FFY 2006 through FFY 2007 has shown a 21.4% increase from 939 to 1,140.

AZRSA applications for transitioning youth increased from 947 in FFY 2006 to 1,146 in FFY 2007. From FFY 2007 through June 30, 2008, is showing an increase of referrals at 19.4% over last year's figure.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with all local Arizona high schools, including charter schools, have been initiated to provide increased outreach, identify services to high school students who will be transitioning from school to work in order to improve referrals, and increase collaboration between AZRSA and the public education agencies. Each secondary school providing educational services to students with disabilities has a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor contact person identified to help increase referrals to the VR Program, as well as provide a direct link.

Table 4.5 Transition Outcomes

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
# Transition Youth Referrals	939	1,140	1,366
# Transition Applications	947	1,146	1,368
# MOUs completed/total	N/A	N/A	169/246

AZRSA's Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the Department of Education is under development with improvements, which allows for the provision of VR services to youth in transition from school to work. It reinforces the working relationship between the Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services and AZRSA. It provides guidance to both parties related to the vocational rehabilitation transition program and available services and also reconfirms the roles and responsibilities of each party. The goals are to increase collaboration, point of contact, improve knowledge and education about the VR Program and the services it provides, and clarify the referral and eligibility processes to all parties.

4.5.B Strategies Used

AZRSA has assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor as a point of contact for every high school statewide in order to increase communication and ease of referral to the VR Program.

AZRSA has developed and initiated a new pilot program for the summer of 2008 for blind and visually impaired high school students to provide Comprehensive Adjustment services that will be available starting the summer after freshman year in order to better prepare students for transition to the world of work and higher educational opportunities. Four comprehensive service programs serving students who are blind and visually impaired have been contracted by AZRSA to provide an array of specialized services which include Orientation and Mobility, Rehabilitation Teaching, Adjustment to Disability, Assistive Technology Assessment and Training, Career Exploration, and other vocational related activities. Students will be provided opportunities for career exploration through volunteer or real work experiences so that they are

better equipped to make a vocational career choice. They will be provided opportunities for College Orientation and College Preparation services. It is envisioned that all students will benefit from one summer-based comprehensive adjustment program, and some students may benefit from two summer-based comprehensive adjustment programs in order to prepare them for the world of work.

AZRSA continues on the team to provide Statewide Interagency Transition Planning training in locations throughout Arizona with the Department of Education, the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Services, for the purpose of discussing MOUs and to help educators and other agency personnel understand the VR Program and the services it provides to school-age youth with disabilities.

AZRSA had targeted for completion MOUs for all public high schools statewide by December 31, 2007, and has the majority completed.

Co-sponsorship of the annual statewide *Transition Conference* by the Department of Education, AZRSA and others is a continuing event which helps bring VR Counselors, high school teachers and other support staff together to bridge the gap between professional staff members serving this population.

AZRSA's *Youth Transition Handbook*, which was designed to assist VR staff, educators, students, and their families in the delivery of transition services was completed and distributed at the statewide Transition Conference in September, 2007.

4.5.C Impediments to Achievement

Manpower shortage due to retention of experienced School to Work VR Counselors is affecting this goal.

High turnover in the schools demands AZRSA to continually train and re-educate school personnel.

General caseload carrying VR Counselors serve both general caseload clients as well as cover school programs, especially in the rural areas.

Lack of other Community Service Providers in rural area impacts the ability to contract for needed services.

PRIORITY 5: ENHANCE SERVICE AVAILABILITY
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Goal 5.1: Identify gaps in service availability and develop strategies for innovation, expansion, or improvement, including the need for establishing, developing and improving community rehabilitation services.

5.1.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA continues to identify the needs and funding of community rehabilitation services to meet the needs of Arizona's diverse client population through the following strategies as identified below. The *2006 Triennial Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities in Arizona*; the Governor's State Rehabilitation Council *Customer and Provider Satisfaction Surveys*; the Statewide Independent Living Council's *2005 Needs Assessment and 2005-2006 Focus Group* data, as well as AZRSA's *VR Consumer Satisfaction Surveys*; and the *AZRSA Community Needs Survey 2007* identifying gaps and needed service areas. Needs assessment data has been reviewed and discussed with the AZRSA Administrator, Deputy Administrator, District Program Managers, VR Supervisors and VR Counselors. The following gaps in service availability were identified: transportation providers both public and private in rural areas; access to assistive technology and certified training providers; and the availability of work adjustment/training, work experience opportunities in rural areas. AZRSA has used Establishment Projects to encourage the development of community rehabilitation service providers in developing services that are needed for VR clients in their path toward achieving an employment goal. AZRSA actively works with community partners and other service providers in bridging the gaps related to needed services in the community for VR clients needing particular services. Many of the AZRSA third-party agreements maximize VR 110 funding for areas such as transition services for youth, behavioral health services for those individuals with a serious mental illness diagnosis, and assist in providing services to many individuals with disabilities in the community in collaboration with community agencies.

Below is the status of AZRSA 2007 Establishment Projects used for the innovation, expansion and development of community rehabilitation service providers for developing programs and services are needed for VR clients in their path toward achieving an employment goal.

Foundation for Blind Children Contract ID: E5304008

The purpose of the grant is to provide for transition and adult rehabilitation services. In the past fiscal year the Foundation was able to complete the capital renovations of the new south campus and the facilities are currently in use. With the use of grant funds, the Foundation was able to develop college preparation programs in partnership with ASU, expand the independent living program for high school students, and develop Video Conferencing capability. The Foundation is in the process of developing online training programs in assistive technology and has to date developed six self paced training modules and instructor moderated courses for consumers in rural areas or those who would benefit from non traditional training programs.

Catholic Community Services of Southern Arizona dba Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) and Valley Center for the Deaf (VCD)
Contract ID: E5324041

The purpose of the grant is to provide new technologies for communication access at One-Stop Career Centers to allow for remote interpreting for the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf/blind population. As a result of the grant, VCD has dedicated one staff to visit the various One-Stops to assist consumers with accessing the communication technology. As a result, consumers are actively using the technology. Video interpreting has been set up in the Tucson COPD and Phoenix VCD offices. One employer uses this service on a regular basis and other employers use it intermittently. COPD and VCD have placed in employment 24 consumers (21 were RSA clients) as a result of the grant. Three consumers have received training and service coordination through the One-Stops with one resulting in placement. COPD has two new contracts with Pima One-Stops. VCD is exploring adding additional contracts and believe once employers become familiar with the service this will help with the sustainability of the program.

Beacon Group
Contract ID: E5324043

The purpose of the grant is to expand and enhance consumer run custodial services. To generate referrals, Beacon has scheduled presentations at each AZRSA office that have resulted in 16 referrals from AZRSA. Of those referrals, three consumers have been placed and successfully closed. Each consumer placed received a rate of pay higher than the minimum wage. During the past contract year Beacon was able to increase their janitorial services which will enhance their sustainability when the grant ends.

Beacon Group
Contract ID: E5324048

The purpose of the grant is to develop and expand partnerships for a document shredding program with business/industries that will result in training and integrated employment opportunities for RSA clients. Beacon received 14 AZRSA referrals and was able to successfully place and close six consumers at a rate higher than the minimum wage.

Blake Foundation
Contract ID: E5324049

The purpose of the grant for the Blake Foundation is for the expansion of the existing janitorial program by adding contracts and enhancing quality services. As a result of the grant funding, Blake has expanded their janitorial program adding a crew in Tucson and 2 buildings in

Safford. Blake Foundation provides work adjustment and supported employment services for RSA clients. 21 RSA clients have received employment and training, 9 of these individuals continue to be employed by the program.

Quality Connections (QC)
Contract ID: E5334602

The purpose of the grant is to expand the consumer run toner recycling program by giving disabled and disadvantaged individuals gainful employment opportunities and quality support services in addition to preventing tons of toner and ink cartridges from finding their way into landfills. The funds have assisted QC in the process of meeting the goal of hiring 8 permanent employees; providing services to 120 individuals, and preventing an estimated 11,000 pounds of waste from ending up in landfills. As a result of their success, QC was recently awarded a set aside contract to provide the entire state with HP compatible cartridges.

The Helping Hands Agency
Contract ID: E5334601

The purpose of the grant is to provide “door to door” public transportation to VR clients and individuals in Page, Arizona at no charge. Currently 5 VR clients are using the service on a regular basis and 1 client is employed by the company. As a result of this grant, public transportation exists and has created a community wide partnership creating a network of funding sources with to accomplish the goal of public transportation.

Graham County Rehabilitation Center (GCRC)
Contract ID: E5324045

The purpose of the grant is to expand the rag recycling program to provide transitional employment for SMI clients. As a result of this grant GCRC was able to double the quantity of rags sold, and increase the capacity to serve SMI clients. Currently GCRC is serving 10 clients.

Douglas ARC
Contract ID: E5324044

The purpose of the grant is to expand janitorial services in the community. VR clients receive work adjustment training/job readiness skills, work experience and job development and placement. Currently Douglas ARC has 4 janitorial contracts with local public offices and private businesses while continuing to look for ways to expand. Douglas ARC has had 5 successful placements and closures.

Douglas ARC
Contract ID: E5324046

The purpose of the grant is to expand grounds keeping services and provide work adjustment training/job readiness skills, work experience and job development and placement for VR clients. Currently Douglas ARC has established seven ongoing grounds keeping/landscaping contracts with local public offices and private businesses. Douglas ARC has had 2 successful placements and closures.

Southeastern Arizona Behavioral Health Services (SEABHS)

Contract ID: E5324054

SEABHS utilized establishment grant funds to develop and implement training for law enforcement and first responder agencies throughout Cochise, Santa Cruz, Graham, and Greenlee counties regarding mental illnesses and the appropriate response to individuals who are diagnosed with a mental illness. The expansion included interviews with law enforcement agencies regarding their interaction with individuals with serious mental illness, development of a county wide consortium consisting of mental health agencies, emergency room staff, law enforcement, families, emergency response teams, and the provision of ongoing training and consultation regarding behavioral health issues. SEABHS reports the endeavor as a success as their curriculum was completed and a sustainability plan has been implemented.

Coyote Taskforce (Our Place)

Contract ID: E5324051

Our Place utilized establishment grant funds to create the "Resource and Advocacy Unit", (RAU). The RAU provided opportunities for consumers with a serious mental illness to build advocacy and peer support skills through meaningful work in a clubhouse setting. RAU also assisted consumers to develop employment goals that would lead to entry level employment in professional fields and to secure employment for members in entry level social service jobs. The program has met their goals of remodeling an area to house the RAU program, hiring staff and implementing the support services. Coyote Taskforce would like to see the number of consumers they serve rise over the next few years and through their established sustainability plan, they are working toward that goal.

The La Frontera Center

Contract ID: E5324050

La Frontera has utilized the grant to establish and enhance employment programs at all of their behavioral health clinics. They have developed an employment initiative to increase the number of employment related activities and outcomes among their consumers within their clinics. They have expanded their staff to include employment specialists, program coordinators, two job developers, two career service specialists and two instructional specialists all of which will focus solely on employed related services. As a result, La Frontera Center has serviced an additional 250 individuals with their employment needs. La Frontera has established a sustainability plan that will further allow them to serve clients.

Coyote Task Force (Café 54)
Contract ID: E5324047

Coyote Task Force has utilized establishment grant funds to provide training in a consumer-run restaurant, Café 54, for adults who are diagnosed with serious mental illness. Through Work Adjustment or Supported Employment, individuals who have expressed an interest in the food service career can obtain job training and placement within the restaurant. Café 54 has training positions in janitorial, dishwashing, serving, cashiering, preparation cook, line cook, counter sales bookkeeping, menu development, marketing and inventory control. The Café 54 management team consists of a professional chef, program manager, and psychosocial rehabilitation specialists. Café 54 has developed a solid reputation in the Tucson community and increased the recognition of the abilities of individuals recovering from mental illness. Café 54 has established sufficient income to sustain the program and continue the training elements.

Arizona State Hospital Gift Shop
Contract ID: E5314563

The Arizona State Hospital has utilized establishment grant funds to develop a gift shop on the property of the state hospital to provide patients the opportunity to work in entry level para-professional positions. Training positions included front counter clerk, inventory management, bookkeeping, custodial, and customer service. Currently, items such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, and items hand made by the patients are sold at the shop and purchased by the patients of the hospital, hospital staff and visitors. Although the gift shop continues to grow, a full time manager is required to ensure sustainability of the program. The gift shop is currently exploring that option.

Northern Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authority (NARBHA) Tailgate Café
Contract ID: E5314563 E5334603

NARBHA has established a consumer run business in the White Mountain Apache area to serve meals at various events within the area. All trainees are trained and certified as food service handlers. Individuals have participated in the marketing, preparation, cooking, serving and money transactions involved in the Tailgate Café. In addition to food, the café has taken on a wood cutting and selling business in an effort to branch out and boost sales. This consumer run business is a program that runs with minimal direction from professionals but has formed partnerships with Apache Behavioral Health, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe Vocational Rehabilitation Program to ensure sustainability.

5.1.B Strategies Used

Development of a vendor/provider procurement system to ensure that qualified suppliers are available to assist AZRSA in providing needed VR services has been completed.

Development and implementation of a Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot contract began June 1, 2007 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of Employment Services has been completed.

Evaluation of the AZRSA Performance-Based Employment Services Pilot. A DES/AZRSA Performance-Based Pilot Evaluation Request for Proposal contract is currently being proposed, and AZRSA is seeking a qualified evaluator to conduct this project. It will address the following evaluation deliverables: client satisfaction, employer satisfaction, AZRSA staff satisfaction, contractor satisfaction, placement rates and quality of placements, and cost and result comparison.

Re-development of priorities for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs has been undertaken with the review of AZRSA's Performance-Based Projects, the majority having been completed within the four year requirement. Further evaluation of Community Rehabilitation Service Providers is needed, especially in rural areas, to develop and fund new program(s) of services to individuals with disabilities in rural areas of the state. Currently, AZRSA is working with Community Rehabilitation Service Providers in a variety of areas such as incentives for service provision outside of metropolitan areas, and other initiatives to increase the provision and availability of services to rural communities statewide.

Quarterly meetings with Community Rehabilitation Service Providers to discuss needs, contracted services, and how to register in "SPIRIT" (the State of Arizona E-Procurement System) in order to enable them to submit their proposals for contracts. All State of Arizona competitively-awarded contracts are issued through the SPIRIT system. SPIRIT provides Arizona suppliers with a personalized, secure, and confidential Internet site to both receive notifications for procurement opportunities and respond with quotes, bids and proposals in a paperless e-Procurement environment.

Quarterly meetings with the AZRSA Deputy Administrator, District Program Managers, and Supervisors working in rural areas to discuss service delivery patterns, gaps, needs, personnel and other issues to deal with the area of service availability, which is especially critical in the rural areas.

Reconfiguration of AZRSA Districts has also been completed, which has assisted in the recognition of AZRSA Districts in the rural areas.

AZRSA continues to work to address areas related to lack of service providers in rural communities in the state, and the lack of availability of other community services. Discussions continue related to lack of service providers in the rural areas of the state and the lack of availability of other community services. AZRSA is compiling data related to who we are serving, the percentage related to the VR population, range of disabilities, age grouping and other demographics in order to address this area.

AZRSA is currently working with the DES Office of Procurement to find solutions and avenues to increase services to individuals with disabilities in a timely manner through the State of Arizona contracts and procurement process.

5.1.C Impediments to Achievement

State of Arizona Purchasing and Procurement Rules and Regulations impact this area.

Inability of Community Rehabilitation Service Providers, especially in rural areas, to create and fund new programs without a guarantee of resources/clients.

Lack of clear guidance in the area of Performance-Based Projects.

Lack of knowledge by communities, community partners, and employers regarding disabilities and the capabilities of individuals with disabilities to become employed.

Lack of knowledge by community rehabilitation providers related to the VR Program and the services provided.

AZRSA has a manpower shortage of qualified staff in this area due to the State of Arizona's hiring freeze on administrative positions.

Goal 5.2: Allocate resources based on updated established formula.

5.2.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA allocates financial resources based upon District prior year expenditures or population statistics available from Census Tract Data information related to each District and their geographical composition. District budgets are allocated on a yearly basis, and during the year quarterly adjustments are made based on actual expenditures. District budgets are also reviewed on a monthly basis, with the AZRSA Manager of the Finance Unit, the Administrator, the Deputy Administrator, and the District Program Managers, and analyzed according to planned and expended allocations with adjustments made accordingly. The Manager of the Finance Unit provides a copy of budget information for all accounts which are broken down for the VR Program by other program funding. Each District Program Manager has the ability to request additional monies if there is a situation where the budgeted amount is inadequate, which gives a great deal of flexibility in managing the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities throughout the VR Program.

5.2.B Strategies Used

Current baselines for the VR Program are identified and prioritized, taking into consideration the following factors: population per District, personnel, office configuration and location, service delivery patterns including numbers of individuals with disabilities served, and growth.

District budgets are allocated on a yearly basis, with quarterly adjustments made based on actual expenditures.

District Program Managers have the flexibility to request additional monies at their discretion.

District budgets are reviewed on a monthly basis and analyzed according to planned and expended allocations with adjustments made accordingly.

5.2.C Impediments to Achievement

Lack of clear guidelines and direction related to the areas of Establishment Projects.

Lack of state appropriated dollars to fully match Federal 110 Vocational Rehabilitation Grant dollars available to the State of Arizona for Establishment Projects.

Timeliness of the allocation process due to the IRIS Case Management System, which is in the process of being replaced by the Libera System 7 Case Management System, which will resolve issues related to the allocation process.

AZRSA's ability to make timely adjustments related to relocation of staff, establishment of new offices, and other service delivery and growth issues, due to bureaucratic constraints governing facilities, procurement and contractual areas, as well as attitudinal barriers of doing business with state governmental agencies.

Difficulty in rural areas related to lack of service providers and unavailability of services.

Goal 5.3 Expand and improve the range of assistive technology devices and services at each stage of the rehabilitation process throughout the state.

Refer to Goal 4.4 which covers extent achieved, strategies and impediments.

Goal 5.4: Overcome barriers in access and participation of individuals with the most significant disabilities for opportunities to employment using ongoing employment supports.

5.4.A Extent Achieved

Title VI, Part B monies are available to all VR Counselors for use with individuals who will need ongoing long-term employment support services. AZRSA has been most successful in

obtaining continued commitments from the Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Services to provide ongoing employment supports for VR clients who are seriously mentally ill. Clients who are also eligible for Title XIX funding through the Division of Developmental Disabilities have been successful in gaining employment with long-term supports. AZRSA has also been able to utilize Title XX funds for a small number of physically-disabled clients to provide ongoing employment supports. A smaller number of VR clients have been able to use the "Natural Supports" concept. AZRSA has not been successful in advocating for additional state dollars to provide ongoing employment supports for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Table 5.4 Supported Employment Outcomes

Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration	FFY2006	FFY2007	FFY2008 (10/01/2007 through 6/30/2008)
# Individuals served in supported employment (title VI part B funds)	197	124	89
# Individuals receiving supported employment (job coaching)	354	251	103
# Individuals closed with supported employment outcomes	314	288	158
Percent changes between FFYs	N/A	-8.3%	

5.4.B Strategies Used

Distribution of Title VI, Part B funds for VR client services are made equitably to all AZRSA Districts and caseloads statewide. Redistribution to Districts or caseload allocations are made on an as needed basis.

5.4.C Impediments to Achievement

Lack of additional resources for ongoing employment supports, has resulted in a decrease of individuals closed as rehabilitated with supported employment.

PRIORITY 6: INCREASE CLIENT ACCESS TO OTHER DES AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Goal 6.1: Increase VR client access to other DES and community services.

6.1.A Extent Achieved

The Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Service Integration Framework for Change in Arizona began in April 2006, with 20 teams identified throughout the state. Each team was

developed to incorporate six DES staff members from each division, six community partners, and six family partners. DES believes that integration services will result in improved outcomes for families. By improving communication between DES and community-based organizations, faith-based organizations and state and local governments, families will have greater access to needed services. By strengthening the partnership between DES and local communities, families' needs and gaps in services will be identified more quickly.

VR staff members from AZRSA were appointed to the *Breakthrough Teams* in order to bridge the gap between other DES services and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Teams worked with the *Framework for Change* to identify strategies and ideas that focused on service integration concepts. The Breakthrough initiative has proven to be successful and will continue through the end of 2009.

AZRSA continues to work with DES agencies statewide and other community agencies and partners in order to make services available to individuals with disabilities. Other agencies include: the Family Assistance Program; Child Protective Services; the Department of Juvenile Corrections; the Department of Health Services, Behavioral Health Services; Regional Behavioral Health Authorities statewide; the Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services and high schools, including charter schools throughout the State; the Veteran's Administration; and others.

AZRSA contributions and recommendations as outlined above have been incorporated into the finalized DES *Service Integration Plan* and further implementation and coordination has been completed. Staff at all levels of the AZRSA program continue to work in promoting Service Integration activities in all areas, working cooperatively and productively with private, public, and community programs. The stage has been set for continued innovation in the ways in which Service Integration principles are incorporated into programs to continuously improve the delivery of human services to individuals, and families in the State of Arizona.

6.1.B Strategies Used

Representation of AZRSA management staff in ongoing development activities of DES Service Integration plans.

Outreach to internal and external agencies, service providers, and customers through public community meetings/forums across the state.

Development and Training for other DES agencies in disability awareness and the VR Program and services offered for eligible individuals with disabilities.

Marketing and public relations activities.

Fostered collaboration with private and public agencies, employers, advocacy and community groups through team building and inter-related focused outreach activities.

6.1.C Impediments to Achievement

Limited knowledge by community partners and awareness of identification of disabilities, issues associated with disabilities, and array of services available.

Manpower shortages, especially from small programs such as Vocational Rehabilitation.

Goal achieved.

Additional data requested regarding the number of referrals and individuals receiving services from other DES and community services for FFY 2006 & 2007 is not available at this time due to system conversion occurring at this time and continuing through the next fiscal year.

Goal 6.2: Increase use of Navigators located in WIA One-Stop Career Centers statewide to bridge the gap between VR and local community resources.

6.2.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA's Department of Labor Disability Navigator Grant Program has been instrumental in guiding WIA One-Stop Career Centers as part of the Workforce Investment System in Arizona towards a level of accessibility to all persons with disabilities supporting and positively impacting their ability to gain/retain employment. This has resulted in improved services, access to assistive technology, better education for staff in the area of disability awareness, removal of barriers, systems change, resource building, and increasing the awareness and participation of people with disabilities seeking jobs and services. Recently, the focus has engaged more employers in disability awareness and education, better supporting the recruitment and hiring of persons with disabilities.

Eight of the nineteen Disability Program Navigator (DPN) positions created are filled. The active DPN positions located at One-Stop Career Centers Statewide are as follows; Yuma, Tucson, Phoenix, Gilbert, Globe-Miami, Avondale, Prescott, and Cottonwood, AZ. A key element to the success of the DPN Program is the AZRSA Contract with the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI), which was initiated on July 1, 2007. The purpose of the contract is to purchase training and website management services in the area of disability awareness and assistive technology. The primary intent of this service is to improve the capacity of AZRSA and partners within the One-Stop Career Centers to serve persons with disabilities and to promote service integration by providing:

- Disability awareness training, on-site Assistive Technology Training and Technical Support;
- Counselor-based assistive technology training;
- Management of the web-based resource, www.ATarizona.com;
- Website enhancements to the web-based resource, www.ATarizona.com.

The Department of Labor, Disability Program Navigator Grant Program is in its sixth year and has made a significant impact to improve the services and encourage persons with disabilities to utilize the services of the WIA One-Stop Career Centers on a statewide basis. Sustaining the DPN role continues as a viable option in the future.

6.2.B Strategies Used

Continue implementation of the Action Plan to purchase and install accessible accommodation equipment to the One-Stop Career Centers for accessibility to job seekers with disabilities. Purchases include, but are not limited to the following Assistive Technology equipment: Ubi-duo systems; automatic door openers; various computer software for the deaf and hard of hearing and for individuals with visual impairments such as Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD), Closed Circuit Television Systems (CCTVs) and FM systems; ergonomic tables and chairs; keyboards.

Continue the *Disability Awareness* Training Plan and curriculum.

Via the contract with the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI), provide training, including hands-on experiences for WIA One-Stop Career Center staff, Community Service Providers, DES staff, and employers to increase awareness of assisting people with disabilities, specific Assistive Technology equipment, and the availability of AT equipment.

Continue community outreach and publicity regarding the One-Stop Career Centers, inviting and encouraging people with disabilities, job seekers, employers, and Community Service Providers to utilize the services available.

Development of MOUs and Intergovernmental agreements on service integration.

Development of a Comprehensive Resource Manual containing disability information and data on various disabilities, aspects of each, local and state resources available, and applicable technology available to accommodate the needs of each customer.

Engage in employer partnerships through job fairs and training seminars to educate various businesses and corporations on assistive technology and accommodations available to support the hiring of individuals with disabilities.

6.2.C Impediments to Achievement

Consistent funding issues affecting the sustainability of the program. Current vacancies continue due to budget constraints both at the local and federal levels.

Attitudinal barriers in the community.

High rates of turnover of One-Stop Career Center staff and DPNs due to the instability and relatively low pay of the positions.

Ongoing recruitment needs for DPNs.

Continuation of updating accessible accommodation equipment such as knowledge of installation, updating, maintaining, and costs associated with this activity.

Additional data requested regarding the number of referrals to the One-Stop, services and training delivered to AZRSA customers, and employment outcomes assisted by the One-Stop for FFY 2006 and FFY 2007 are not available at this time.

PRIORITY 7 : MARKETING AND OUTREACH

Goal 7.1: Develop and implement an ongoing strategic marketing plan

7.1 A. Extent Achieved

AZRSA and *RIESTER*, have developed and implemented a variety of marketing tools to date which have included: focus groups of consumers, staff, and stakeholders in order to access the perception of the agency; development of a new agency logo which has been incorporated into all of the printed materials to date; and a new Vocational Rehabilitation Program brochure was completed and distributed (February 2008). An AZRSA poster was also completed and distributed statewide to all AZRSA offices to assist in advertising the VR Program. Marketing products currently in production include: AZRSA banners/posters, programmatic brochures for distribution in AZRSA offices, other AZDES offices and community partners. A new VR Orientation video/DVD featuring successful VR clients and an online streaming vignette featuring the AZRSA Administrator will soon be available for use on the internet.

7.1 B. Strategies Used

AZRSA contracted with a leading marketing firm, *RIESTER*, in May 2007 to develop and implement a strategic marketing plan to increase the awareness of the public VR Program and to develop a branding of the agency to more positively identify Arizona's Vocational Rehabilitation Program in the community with the services it provides to individuals with disabilities.

7.1 C. Impediments to Achievement

Goal is currently in progress.

Goal 7.2: Improve the image of the AZRSA VR program within Arizona communities

7.2 A. Extent Achieved

Marketing activities continue to be implemented throughout the year in an effort to develop greater levels of public understanding related to the VR Program. This heightened awareness, coupled with greater exposure, has resulted in positive feedback and increased referrals and applications.

7.2 B. Strategies Used

AZRSA continues to partner with Councils, government agencies, the public including consumer and advocacy groups, and with other constituency groups to increase marketing the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Information about the VR Program is disseminated and continues to be an important community education tool.

7.2 C. Impediments to Achievement

Goal is currently in progress.

Goal 7.3: Increase outreach to individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities.

7.3.A Extent Achieved

AZRSA has added and realigned Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to areas that were determined as underserved in an effort to increase outreach to individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities. Brochures and publications for the VR Program have been developed in Spanish and in alternative formats and will be distributed upon receipt. As stated under 7.1 A the video is in final editing phase.

7.3 B. Strategies Used

AZRSA is working with other administrations within DES in determining underserved areas of the State and making Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors more accessible in underserved areas of Arizona. AZRSA has created brochures and publications related to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Spanish and in alternative formats. The development of a VR Orientation video which includes minorities with disabilities, and the production availability in Spanish, ASL, Open Captioning, and with Descriptive Video is currently in the final editing phase.

7.3 C Impediments to Achievement

None noted at this time. Goal in progress.

Goal 7.4: Increase marketing and outreach activities to employers

7.4 A Extent Achieved

AZRSA has increased its marketing and outreach activities and has developed materials and brochures which have been distributed to employers, including the newly produced video/DVD which will be shared with employers. Through the Workforce Investment Program, AZRSA Disability Program Navigators (DPNs) have continued to work with employers advocating for individuals with disabilities. They have provided training and seminars in order to increase marketing and outreach to the employer community and have provided many adaptive “hands on” trainings related to the Assistive Technology (AT) area. AZRSA continues to work with employers advertising their job openings statewide and distributes employer job postings through the AZRSA distribution list. AZRSA has participated with Jobing.com statewide and has been instrumental in partnering with other agencies working with individuals with disabilities in providing accommodations at job fairs through a jointly run accommodations booth. AZRSA is also working with Employment Networks (ENs) on a statewide basis especially with the new Ticket to Work regulations.

7.4 B. Strategies Used

AZRSA has partnered with Jobing.com to participate in eight statewide job fairs. AZRSA will network with employers to post their job openings through the AZRSA distribution list. Collaborating with ENs will continue in order to increase communication and linkages related to the new Ticket to Work regulations. The DPN’s will continue to work with employers in the community to advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities and will continue to provide training in AT.

7.4 C Impediments to Achievement

Due to recent State of Arizona budget reductions for 2008 and 2009, AZRSA’s marketing and outreach resources may be curtailed. The economic downturn has also affected this goal due to reductions in the workforce by employers.

Evaluation and Reports of Progress of Innovation and Expansion Activities to Expand and Improve Services to Individuals with Disabilities and to Support the SRC and SILC
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Funding Utilized for State Rehabilitation and Independent Living Council Activities

AZRSA utilized Part B, Title I funds for State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and Part B, Title VII funds for State Independent Living Council (SILC) quarterly meetings. These funds are primarily used to pay for council members travel, meeting expenses, interpreter fees and supplies.

